

GAO

Briefing Report to the Honorable  
Nancy Landon Kassebaum,  
U.S. Senate

December 1989

# ARMY TRAINING

## Need to Improve Assessments of Land Requirements and Priorities





United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and  
International Affairs Division

B-237698

December 1, 1989

The Honorable Nancy Landon Kassebaum  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Kassebaum:

This report on the Army's land acquisition plans addresses the questions you posed in your June 30, 1989, letter to us regarding the Army's need for additional land at Ft. Riley, Kansas. You asked that we examine the Army's overall training land acquisition plans and procedures, including procedures for establishing needs, examining alternatives, and setting acquisition priorities. You wanted to know to what extent the Army's acquisition plans had been affected by the work of the recent Base Closing Commission<sup>1</sup> and whether a failure to expand Ft. Riley would make it vulnerable to closing as part of any future base-closing efforts. You also asked about the impact of potential force reductions on land acquisition needs. We briefed your staff on our preliminary findings in October 1989. This letter summarizes the results of that briefing. The results are more fully discussed in appendix I.

## Background

Ft. Riley is home to the Army's First Infantry Division. Two of the division's three maneuver brigades, with a total of six battalions, are stationed at Ft. Riley; its third brigade is forward stationed in Geoplingen, Germany. Ft. Riley is also home to one of three Reserve Officer Training Corps regions and provides summer training for units assigned to the region. Units permanently assigned to Ft. Riley undergo training there and also participate in periodic training exercises at the Army's National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, California, and in periodic exercises in which they deploy to Europe.

The First Division is known as a mechanized infantry division. Its maneuver units are equipped with M-1 tanks and are also fielding the Bradley Fighting Vehicle. The Division has a fourth, aviation brigade also stationed at Ft. Riley. It is now fielding UH-60 helicopters and will be fielding AH-64 helicopters next year.

Ft. Riley is one of many installations that the Army considers to have inadequate land for home-station training. Ft. Riley has identified a

<sup>1</sup>The Commission is formally known as the Defense Secretary's Commission on Base Realignment and Closure. Its report was transmitted to the Secretary of Defense on December 29, 1988, and shortly thereafter to the Congress.

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## Inadequate Basis for Assessing Training Land Needs and Establishing Acquisition Priorities

Army training land acquisition priorities were last established in March 1986. We could not determine the basis for those priorities or any criteria for determining relative needs among installations. Also, Army acquisition initiatives have not followed the stated priorities; they have focused on what the Army terms "targets of opportunity" to acquire additional land. The initiatives have also been largely motivated by actions initiated by individual commanders and targeted toward specific installations, rather than by a consideration of the collective and relative needs of all Army installations.

The Army is making some changes to its training land requirements determination process, including changing the order in which some steps in the process are completed and formalizing the steps through regulation to provide for consistency in future acquisition efforts. The Army has not yet established a target date for completing these actions, and conflicting information exists concerning the sequencing of planned steps involving Ft. Riley. Army officials told us that they would consider providing interim guidance to clarify the process. The Army is updating other guidance, which specifies precise land requirements for maneuver training; however, that action is not expected to be completed until some time in 1990. The Army is not likely to have a formally revised land acquisition priority list until then.

The Army has recently given increased recognition to examining alternatives to land acquisition. Previously, alternatives were considered to some extent at different points in the process. Now, the Army is requiring a specific alternative analysis requirement early in the process, but it still comes after, rather than before, preliminary decisions that land is required. Further, this analysis is done at the installation level where broader perspective and decision-making authority is limited. Even on a broader basis, agreement does not always exist concerning potential alternatives. For example, the Department of Defense and the Army cite the use of training simulators as an important feature of future Army training, particularly when land shortages exist. Yet many responsible Army officials reject the notion that simulators can provide a viable alternative to additional training land, stating that simulators provide neither sufficient realism nor the rugged environment in which soldiers can expect to fight. The issue is unsettled in terms of how it affects Army land acquisition plans.

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and on Appropriations; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and the Secretary of the Army. We will also make copies available to other interested parties on request.

Please call me at (202) 275-4141 if you have any questions about this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Davis".

Richard Davis  
Director, Army Issues



Appendix I  
 Responses to Questions Posed by  
 Senator Kassebaum

Colorado, in the early 1980s. In this instance, the Army set out to buy about 82,000 acres of maneuver land in accordance with the requirements of TC 25-1. However, due to environmental constraints, 200,000 acres were required in order to obtain the 82,000 acres of land usable for conducting maneuvers.

The Army has identified 13 military installations in the United States for priority consideration in acquiring additional training land. Table I.1 shows the Army's land acquisition priorities, along with acreage sought, as established in March 1986.

**Table I.1: Army Land Acquisition Priorities**

Ranking	Installation/location	Acreage sought
1	Ft. Polk, Louisiana	83,000
2	Ft. McClellan, Alabama	13,800
3	Ft. Riley, Kansas	82,000
4	Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri	15,868
5	Ft. Knox, Kentucky	23,700
6	Ft. Irwin, California	238,000
7	Ft. Campbell, Kentucky	33,280
8	Ft. Sill, Oklahoma	664,671
9	Ft. Lewis, Washington	50,000
10	Schofield Barracks, Hawaii	36,600
11	Ft. Bragg, North Carolina	139,000
12	Ft. Eustis, Virginia	2,500
13	Ft. A.P. Hill, Virginia	51,000

This list of installations is considered by the Army to be a "nominal" priority list. This means, in practice, that acquisition efforts may be initiated for any installation on the list based on targets of opportunity because of the presumed greater availability, feasibility, and affordability of acquiring land at one location over another. An example of such shifting priorities involves the Army's current efforts to acquire land for its National Training Center, located at Ft. Irwin, California, where much of the land being sought is under the control of the Bureau of Land Management. The Army has also initiated actions to purchase land at its Yakima Firing Center, which is associated with Ft. Lewis, Washington. This land is also adjacent to other federal land. The Army expects to request funding for the Ft. Lewis acquisition for fiscal year 1992 and for the National Training Center for fiscal year 1993. Funding for any Ft. Riley expansion would likely occur even later.

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**GAO** Does the Army have adequate procedures for acquiring land?

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No.

- The Army is revising its priorities without having established adequate procedures for deciding relative needs.
- Earlier and higher-level focus is needed on alternatives to land acquisition.

The Army, in a July 1989 memorandum to its major commands, expressed the desire to establish a reasonable and supportable strategy for future land acquisition projects and sought their input concerning future acquisition priorities. As of November 1989, the Army had not established guidance for determining relative priorities among installations other than noting the work of the recent Base Closing Commission, which states that many maneuver installations are at, near, or over capacity in their use of land. The Army's two major commands with installations in the continental United States are FORSCOM, which oversees divisional forces, and the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), which oversees training centers. Both commands responded

broader perspective for all installations in planning their training programs and examining alternatives or combinations of alternatives to correct deficiencies before seeking additional land. On the other hand, despite the high-level Army emphasis on the future use of simulators, there are rather divergent views within the Army concerning simulators. Many responsible Army officials reject the notion that simulators can provide a viable alternative to additional training land, stating that simulators provide neither sufficient realism nor the rugged environment in which soldiers can expect to fight. The issue is unsettled in terms of how it affects Army land acquisition plans.

Following the analysis of alternatives study, the real estate planning and the environmental impact studies would be completed. We discussed the revised process with various Army officials at the Department of the Army, the Army Corps of Engineers, and Ft. Riley. The officials provided conflicting information concerning what sequence would be followed in completing the real estate planning and the environmental impact studies. An Army headquarters official told us that these steps were expected to be formalized in a regulation; however, the date the regulation would be issued was uncertain as of November 1989. Army officials told us that they would consider providing interim guidance.

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**GAO**    **Would Ft. Riley be closed  
if it did not expand?**

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Not likely.

- The Base Closing Commission study does not project a potential closing of Ft. Riley.
- Army officials suggest little likelihood of Ft. Riley's being closed.

Ft. Riley ranked 11th in the Base Closing Commission's assessment of mission suitability among 13 maneuver installations. At the same time, the Commission's data suggested that most maneuver installations—not just Ft. Riley—used their land to the fullest possible extent. The Commission's data showed that 9 of 13 maneuver installations it had examined were at or near capacity in their use of land; one, Ft. Bragg, was considered to be the most over-stressed installation in the ground maneuver category.

Ft. Riley's low ranking caused some public speculation that Ft. Riley could be a candidate for closure in a future base-closing effort, if it were not expanded. Army and Commission officials knowledgeable about the

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**GAO**    **How would force reductions  
affect the Army's land needs?**

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Unclear for now; too many  
unknowns such as

- the extent of potential  
reductions,
  
- what happens to the forces  
if reductions occur, and
  
- whether reserve forces are  
increased.

Budget constraints and current negotiations on conventional force reductions involving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact could result in a reduction of U.S. forces in Europe and overall reductions in U.S. forces. However, to what extent and when reductions might occur are not clear now. It is uncertain whether units that are withdrawn from Europe or elsewhere would be re-stationed in the United States or taken out of the active force. There is further uncertainty over whether reserve force structure would then be increased to offset reductions in the active forces. Given these uncertainties, it is difficult to project to what extent additional training land would need to be acquired. At the same time, Army officials have noted

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# Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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Our objectives were to examine the Army's land acquisition plans in response to questions posed by Senator Kassebaum. We limited our focus to Army training lands in general, with a principal emphasis on Ft. Riley for this initial report. We identified decision-making processes, criteria, and other factors affecting the Army's acquisition plans. We obtained and reviewed applicable Army guidance, correspondence, and studies. We interviewed Army and Department of Defense officials at the following locations:

- Office of the Secretary of the Army, Washington, D.C.;
- Army Corps of Engineers, Washington, D.C.;
- U.S. Army Forces Command, Ft. McPherson, Georgia;
- U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Ft. Monroe, Virginia;
- First Infantry Division, Ft. Riley, Kansas;
- Combined Arms Center, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas; and
- Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, Arlington, Virginia.

Additionally, we interviewed officials associated with the work of the Defense Secretary's Commission on Base Realignment and Closure and reviewed pertinent data associated with the Commission's report. Further, we obtained community perspective on the potential expansion of Ft. Riley through contacts with representatives of local citizen organizations and a review of pertinent articles in area newspapers.

Our review was conducted from July to November 1989 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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# Major Contributors to This Report

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**Appendix I  
Responses to Questions Posed by  
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that the Army's space in the United States to adequately house and train additional units is limited.

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Commission's approach told us that the Commission had never seriously considered recommending closure of maneuver installations, including Ft. Riley. These officials saw little likelihood that Ft. Riley would be closed in the future. Other knowledgeable Army officials, including the current Secretary of the Army, have stated that it is unlikely that a facility such as Ft. Riley would be closed.

The Base Closing Commission, in noting the shortage of military training lands, recommended that funds derived from the closing of military installations be used to acquire training lands. However, the Commission's focus was on acquiring training land in the western United States where large expanses of land are available near the Army's National Training Center.

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**GAO**    **How does the Base Closing  
Commission affect land needs?**

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**The Commission's work gave  
increased visibility to  
training land needs and  
an impetus for improvement.**

Although the Army has begun to take some increased interest in acquiring additional training land in the past 2 years, publicity surrounding the Base Closing Commission's report and how the report might affect Ft. Riley's expansion gave increased visibility to the issue of land acquisition. The potential land acquisition at Ft. Riley became widely publicized in the Kansas civilian community following the December 1988 issuance of the Base Closing Commission's report and public disclosure of the Commission's information on the post's relative ranking among maneuver installations. While the Army had previously cited a need to expand Ft. Riley, the Commission's report helped to highlight the issue.

that they could not update their requirements and establish new priorities, pending completion of an Army effort to update TC 25-1, dated August 1978, which provides a basis to establish collective training land requirements. That effort is not expected to be completed until some time in 1990.

Pending the revision of TC 25-1, FORSCOM stated that its interim priority list for training land acquisitions included Fts. Lewis, Irwin, Polk, Riley, Campbell, and Bragg in that order. TRADOC reported that its interim priorities were Fts. McClellan, Knox, Sill, and Eustis. The Army has not established a composite interim list that integrates the two commands' priorities. In fact, the Army lacks criteria to determine relative training deficiencies and land needs among installations.

In October 1988, the Army began to require high-level concept approval for land acquisition projects to proceed beyond the land use requirements study. For example, the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Logistics granted concept approval for the Ft. Riley land acquisition process on October 24, 1989. While previous land acquisition efforts have included some degree of alternative analyses at each phase of the process, the Army is now requiring a separate alternatives analysis study once approval has been granted to proceed beyond the land use requirements study. However, we believe the fact that the alternative analysis comes after the initial decision has been made that additional land is required may bias the analysis of alternatives. Moreover, because both the land use requirements and the analysis of alternatives studies are completed primarily at the installation level, they may offer only a limited perspective, not fully exploiting alternatives that might be considered.

Alternatives not clearly under the control of individual installations could, for example, involve increased funding for off-post exercises or the increased use of simulators to help compensate for the lack of sufficient land. The Army's long-range training plan, approved by the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans on July 20, 1989, states that simulators will be required for training when training areas and ranges are unavailable or inadequate.

On the one hand, what seems to be missing are higher level assessments and guidance addressing the extent of maneuver training deficiencies and suggesting acceptable offsets to training land limitations at the installation level. These assessments and guidance could provide a

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A Forces Command (FORSCOM) official told us that in 1988, the then FORSCOM commander took a renewed interest in land acquisition and asked three installations to update their land use requirements studies. These posts were Fts. Polk, Riley, and Campbell. Of the three, only Ft. Riley has gained approval to proceed beyond the land use requirements study phase, due in part to its own efforts to pursue land acquisition.

# Responses to Questions Posed by Senator Kassebaum

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## **GAO** What are the Army's training land acquisition plans?

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- Army plans indicate that many installations need land.
- Acquisitions follow "targets of opportunity."
- Fort Riley is not the Army's top priority.

According to Training Circular (TC) 25-1, about 82,000 contiguous acres of maneuver land are needed for the largest, battalion-level, ground maneuver exercise; this requirement applies to Ft. Riley and other installations. Environmental considerations could require an expansion of the amount of land actually required; the specific amount would be affected by environmental factors unique to individual candidate sites. The estimate of required acreage presumes the continuing validity of criteria contained in TC 25-1 regarding the amount of maneuver land required.

The Army's only sizable land acquisition project in recent years was the purchase of 200,000 acres known as Pinion Canyon for Ft. Carson,

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## Abbreviations

GAO	General Accounting Office
FORSCOM	Forces Command
TC	Training Circular
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command

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## Closure of Fort Riley Not Likely

While the work of the recent Base Closing Commission has highlighted what the Army considers a long-standing need for additional training land, we found nothing in the Commission's report to suggest that Ft. Riley would be closed if it does not expand. Indeed, the Commission cited numerous installations as being at, above, or over capacity in all categories of land use. The Commission stated that the acquisition of additional land may be needed, especially in less populated areas, to satisfy military requirements. It endorsed the expansion of large, combined training facilities such as the Army's National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, California.

It is unclear how future force reductions might affect the Army's training land needs. For example, there are too many unknowns such as the extent of potential reductions, what happens to the forces if reductions occur, and whether reserve forces are increased.

The question of whether Ft. Riley needs additional land and, if so, how much involves broad issues that go beyond the scope of this report. A follow-on review and report will address questions such as to what extent (1) the Army has identified specific requirements for and deficiencies in maneuver training and developed strategies and alternatives to address them, (2) the Army can document and/or quantify how land shortages have adversely affected training and readiness, (3) the need for additional land can be offset by the National Training Center and other off-post exercises, and (4) simulators can enhance training and offset training land requirements. We are deferring making any recommendations until the completion of this follow-on work.

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As you requested, we did not obtain written agency comments on this report; however, we did discuss the results of our work with responsible Army officials and included their comments where appropriate. Their principal comments focused on differentiating between the process of determining land requirements and the process of acquiring land. They emphasized that in the case of Ft. Riley, a decision had not yet been made by the Secretary of the Army to acquire additional land. We have used the term "land acquisition process" in a general sense to encompass the full spectrum of steps from requirements determination to actually acquiring land.

As agreed with your office, we plan no further distribution of this report until 10 days after its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services

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training land shortfall requiring a minimum of 82,000 contiguous acres of land to provide needed battalion-level maneuver space. Most maneuver training at Ft. Riley is now at the platoon and company levels. Ft. Riley officials state that tank and gunnery training on their multi-purpose range complex increasingly consumes more of the time and space available for maneuvers and precludes simultaneous maneuver training at the battalion level. The Bradley Fighting Vehicle provides greater maneuver capability than did the M-113 armored personnel carrier, which it replaces, and also requires greater use of Ft. Riley's multi-purpose range complex.

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## Results in Brief

We found several shortcomings in the Army's plans and procedures for establishing acquisition priorities, identifying land requirements, and examining alternatives:

- The Army is revising its priorities without having established adequate procedures for deciding relative needs.
- The Army's guidance, which provides a basis to establish collective training land requirements, is 11 years old; recognizing that the guidance is outdated, the Army has begun to update it.
- The Army requires an alternative analysis study before it makes a final decision to acquire land. However, this analysis may be biased because it is not done until after the initial decision has been made that additional land is required.

The Base Closing Commission's work gave increased visibility to the issue of training land limitations at many installations and provided the impetus for increased attention to land acquisition. Ft. Riley is 1 of 13 military installations the Army has identified as needing additional training land; however, it is not the Army's top acquisition priority. The Commission's study does not suggest that Ft. Riley could be closed in a future base-closing effort, if it is not expanded.

The uncertainty over future force reductions makes it difficult to project the impact such cuts might have on Army land acquisition.

